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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN:  
A CONTRAST IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

by



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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

This study was done in an attempt to analyze the differences which may account for the pronounced differential political participation in two similar provinces -- Alberta and Saskatchewan.

One of the key differences which would seem to have explanatory value is the disparate political history of the two provinces. Although they both shared a common history, it was a different brand in each province --

Alberta going right and Saskatchewan to the left. This may have been one of the first of the differences, but a more important one is the fact of Alberta going for "order" and Saskatchewan for "justice" and "equality". Farmers choosing "order" in Alberta and "justice" in Saskatchewan. This choice is the accident in history which has had far-reaching effects on the socialization of agriculture in each province in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

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Our treatment of the economic factors deals with differences experienced in the depression -- the co-operatives, natural resources, organization, the distribution of the labor force, and the price domestic products. It is shown that there is a variance between Alberta and Saskatchewan in all of these categories. It is not to be stated that economic prosperity is related to political participation, as it seems





## ABSTRACT

This study has been an attempt to analyze the differences which may account for the astounding differential political participation in two similar provinces -- Alberta and Saskatchewan. One of the key differences which would seem to have explanatory value is the disparate political histories of the two provinces. Although they both embraced populism, it was a different brand in each province -- Alberta going right and Saskatchewan to the left. This may have been one of the first of the divergencies, but a more important one is the fact of Alberta opting for "direct" participation in government and Saskatchewan farmers choosing "indirect" or partisan politics. This choice is the accident in history which was to have such far-reaching effects as the near extinction of opposition of a major party in Alberta which in turn led to monopoly government and hence to apathy amongst the populace. In Saskatchewan the choice for partisan politics led to an active manipulation of political parties necessitating voting participation. These and other things discussed in the text lead me to conclude that the diverse political evolutions in Saskatchewan and Alberta are important factors in determining the political participation in the respective provinces.

Our treatment of the economic factors deals with differences experienced in the depression -- the co-operatives, natural resources, urbanization, the distribution of the labour force, and the gross domestic products. It is shown that there is a variance between Alberta and Saskatchewan in all of these categories. If it can be assumed that economic prosperity is related to political participation, as it seems



fair to assume they are, then it is not surprising that Saskatchewan's voter turnout has been consistently higher than Alberta's.

The ethnicity factor has proven to be nebulous -- for this study, at least. More elaborate, empirically oriented studies are needed to clarify this dimension. It has been shown that there are different patterns of voting among the various ethnic groups but this does not necessarily explain the differential voting habits of the two populations given the heterogenous nature of the ethnic composition of both provinces.

It has been shown that there is a disparity in the levels of political participation in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Voter turnouts and membership in opinion-dispensing organizations have been shown to be quite different. In addition informal inquiries have revealed that many Saskatchewan people who have migrated to Alberta feel frustrated because not many Albertans seem interested in political discussions. There must be a reason for this.

This inquiry has led me to believe that the political history and culture of each of the two provinces, along with the economic base have had a powerful influence on the political participation of the populations of Alberta and Saskatchewan.





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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION:

As a long time resident of both Alberta and Saskatchewan I have always been puzzled by the different levels of political participation in these two roughly similar provinces. By "political participation" I mean: (a) amount of participation in party politics and other opinion-dispersing groups; (b) percentage of voter turn-out; and (c) a demonstrated ability to vote pragmatically (ie. to be aware of the political issues, the stance of the various candidates and their respective parties -- both provincially and federally).

That there is a difference in the political participation of Saskatchewan and Alberta, cannot be doubted. A comparison of voter turn-out in Alberta and Saskatchewan provincial elections between 1932 and 1971 shows that Saskatchewan consistently has from 10 to 20 percentage points higher turn-out than Alberta. As a matter of fact, the Saskatchewan voter turn-out is consistently the highest in all of Canada (Martin Robin, 1972). Furthermore, "the proportion of people in Saskatchewan who are party activists or opinion leaders...was greater than the proportion in any other province" (Ibid, p. 313). Courtney and Smith sum it up nicely when they say that "by virtue of political participation and involvement, Saskatchewan voters over the years have become aware of various issues, policies, candidates, and parties, as well as their alternatives" (Ibid).

Compare the latter point to the findings of Gurbachan S. Paul and Carlo Caldarola in a study of "Voting in Edmonton" (1979) in which they report a "high percentage (about 40 percent) of "no response/don't know"





or of "total distrust of all present political parties" (Caldarola, p. 324).

According to these researchers, this indicates "widely spread political apathy among the people" (Ibid). Political apathy would probably preclude both knowledge of and participation in political affairs. As for the discrepancy in voter turn-out between the two provinces, the difference in the "means" of voter turn-out for the years of 1934 - 1971 (Saskatchewan 83% and Alberta 57%) (Carlo Caldarola, 1979) is a good indicator of the different levels of political participation.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I have established the fact that there is a difference in political participation between Alberta and Saskatchewan. The problem now is: Why is Saskatchewan more politically active than Alberta? On the surface, these provinces seem very much alike. They have a common boundary; their economies have until recently, been largely based upon agriculture. Historically, they have experienced a similar political and social milieu.

Saskatchewan and Alberta have always served as a "hinterland" to central Canada's "metropolis" (Davis, 1971) with all of the political and economic ramifications entailed in such a relationship. Alberta and Saskatchewan were both part of the Northwest Territories at the time of confederation and as such played a major part in John A. Macdonald's National Policy. They were to be the recipients of a heavy influlx of immigrants from Europe. These homesteaders were to produce staple products for the provinces to the east and in turn become willing consumers of manufactured goods from Central Canada. This plan seems to have been followed quite diligently to the point of creating a basic alienation (shared to this day) of the western provinces.



Saskatchewan and Alberta both became provinces in the same year, (1905) but neither received jurisdiction over their natural resources until 1931. This inferior position in confederation, which was resented by Alberta and Saskatchewan has since turned up again with Ottawa's attempt to control their oil.

These similarities in structure and experience make the two provinces suitable for comparison and it is within this context that I plan to examine the differences in Alberta and Saskatchewan: which may account for the disparities in levels of political participation. There are three areas which I would like to examine. The first of these areas is the "economic base" of each province. Although we have stated that the agricultural base of each province provides a similar economic background, upon closer examination it can be seen that there are important differences in this one dimension of economic base.

Saskatchewan (for the period 1910-50) had essentially a one-crop economy -- wheat. Alberta, on the other hand, had a more diversified agricultural base, such as mixed farming and ranching. When the drought occurred during the "hungry thirties" Alberta farmers were in a better position to deal with it. Not only did they have irrigation in southern Alberta but the use of this arid area was largely for ranching. This enabled the rancher to withstand the drought period by reducing the number of cattle to the acre. Alberta's share of the infamous Palliser Triangle -- an arid area in the southwestern part of Saskatchewan and the south-east corner of Alberta -- is much smaller than Saskatchewan's. Relatively then, Saskatchewan experienced more deprivation than did Alberta during the thirties.





With the discovery of oil in the Turner Valley in 1936 and the 1948 Leduc oil strike, Alberta surged ahead of Saskatchewan in terms of resource-related industries, such as the servicing, processing and extraction industries. During this time Saskatchewan's economy remained essentially agricultural and it wasn't until the late 1950's and 1960's when the potash industry began to flourish that the economic disparities between Alberta and Saskatchewan began to lessen.

It is apparent from the above discussion that there are differences in the economic bases of Alberta and Saskatchewan, despite certain general similarities. From the level of diversification in agriculture to the evolution of resource related industrialization in the two provinces, the differences in the economic category would seem to be significant.

The economic aspects, then, are worth investigating to discover whether they contribute to the respective disparities in political participation.

A second important difference between Alberta and Saskatchewan is their "political climates". The latter term refers to the well-documented and studied contrasting left-wing/right-wing leanings of the two provinces (from the 1930's on). Both provinces have had similar political structures and experiential patterns both before and after the attaining of provincehood in 1905. But with the rise of the protest parties in the early thirties, differences began to emerge -- Saskatchewan going left and Alberta eventually going right. Whether this was an accident in history (Johnson, 1978) or a result of economic factors, charismatic leadership, or many of the other ideas contained in the literature (Lipset, 1950; McPherson, 1962; Smith, 1969; etc.) is a moot point. The phenomenon that



I am investigating in this study is the surprising contrast in levels of political participation in the Saskatchewan and Alberta. The contrast in their political climates (left-wing/right-wing populism) are of interest only in as much as each contributes to the amount of political participation in each of the provinces.

In my initial research into this phenomenon, I have found that many of the variables which I have put forward as possible linkages in the chain leading to the differing levels of political participation in the two provinces have also been suggested (in the literature) as the reasons behind Saskatchewan going "left" and Alberta going "right" within the general frame of populism. Be this as it may, I intend to show that the variables I am suggesting are also correlated with differential levels of political participation in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

It is apparent that there is a difference in the political climates of these two provinces. Alberta has consistently elected conservative governments since 1940, usually with a strong majority. In fact, there has been a pattern of electing such strong majorities as to render the oppositions to be almost meaningless. There is no doubt that charismatic leadership has played a part in this. It started with Aberhart and Manning and is still apparent in the electoral appeal of the Conservative leader, Peter Lougheed. Aberhart's ascendancy was indeed charismatic and seemed powerful enough to inspire a utopian dream amongst the Alberta populace. Manning followed in Aberhart's footsteps but was pale by contrast even though he did retain a strong following while continuing in the religious trend of his predecessor.

According to Caldarola and Paul (1979) the decline of the Socred's popularity was primarily due to Strom's lack of charismatic leadership.





On the other hand Saskatchewan voters have for many years favoured parties more to the left with Liberal and, more significantly C.C.F. being elected. These people seem to vote more pragmatically and, with the possible exception of Tommy Douglas, seem little affected by charismatic leadership. Furthermore, there has usually been a viable opposition in the Saskatchewan legislature. The right-wing/left-wing dichotomy is the most obvious difference in the political climates. But the phenomena of support for charismatic leadership, strong majority government, and the length of tenure of a particular party in Alberta is also in direct contrast to the pragmatic voting and viable opposition by the Saskatchewan electorate.

To summarize the discussion of the political climate, it can be said that there is (and has been since the early 1930's) a clear difference in the political climates of these two provinces. The very fact that Saskatchewan has been left-wing and Alberta right-wing, both within the framework of capitalism, makes a different political climate in which people were living and in which they were deciding to participate or not to participate in policies. While "political climate" is not to be confused with "political participation", the former can certainly be viewed as being a contributing factor in the evolution of the latter phenomenon in the respective provinces.

There is evidence in the literature that ethnic and religious enclaves may exhibit differing political participation from that of the larger community. But this evidence is inconclusive and is related more by inference than by actual evidence. The writers seem to be referring more to interest in the community or the province as a whole. In writing of ethnic enclaves in Alberta Caldarola (1979) claims that settlement of



immigrants into ethnic enclaves "militated against an integration of interests in the province as a whole". Lipset (1950), in discussing the agrarian social movement in Saskatchewan, declares it has hampered by the presence of ethnic enclaves, which in many cases were also tightly integrated within themselves and very loosely integrated with the larger society. The cleavages, according to Lipset (1950), obstructed or delayed the process of class consciousness in Saskatchewan. These statements are possibly related to but not necessarily referring to political participation.

On the other hand, W.L. Morton (1955) states that the people who really developed Western Canada were overwhelmingly of Canadian birth and ancestry and that the West was particularly favourable to the development of Utopian ideas which were diffused throughout the English-speaking world.

So it can be seen that there is corroborating and sometimes conflicting evidence regarding the development of political participation in the two provinces. However, the thread that runs through these opinions and reports is that ethnicity and religion/ethnicity may possibly be linked levels of political participation. However, the evidence is inconclusive.

The discussion up to this point has focussed on establishing the existence of a disparity in levels of political participation in Alberta and Saskatchewan; and in examining three elements which could be affecting the latter.

The purpose of this study is to explore what effect, if any, economic patterns, political patterns, religious and ethnic patterns have on the development of political participation. The cases I am using are Alberta





and Saskatchewan but the results could conceivably be applied to other areas or states of the world. While always looking for and welcoming a significant solution or a causal link, I will be satisfied if I am able to illuminate the problem in a meaningful way.

I intend to present this as a sociological and historical study. Events and data will be presented in a roughly chronological order. Secondary data will be used with some utilization of government documents and census data.



## CHAPTER II

### DIFFERENTIAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION DESPITE SIMILARITIES IN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of a wide disparity between Alberta and Saskatchewan in terms of their level of political participation is quite apparent when one examines the voter turnouts in the two provinces for the past fifty years. Couple this with the fact that the two prairie provinces have a remarkably similar historical background, and the difference becomes more significant. Voter turnouts are one measure of political participation; another measure is the level of participation in opinion dispensing organizations.

Part 1 of this chapter will deal with empirical evidence and secondary evaluations of political participation in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Part 2 explores the historical evolution and political structures of these two similar political entities. Empirical evidence and theoretical concepts examined in this chapter will lay the foundation for the analysis of the difference in political participation.





## PART 1

The most reliable indicator of political participation is voter turnout in election. It is also the most accessible data to obtain. For these reasons I have chosen to examine voter turnouts for Saskatchewan and Alberta at the very outset.

Table 1 gives a breakdown of voter turnout for Alberta and Saskatchewan for the provincial elections that were held between 1934 and 1971 in each of the provinces. As can be seen from these figures, Saskatchewan has a consistently higher voter turnout for the years shown. These differences spread from 2 percentage points to 24 points with an average difference of 14.9 points. The lowest voter turnout percentage in Saskatchewan was 78 percent in 1967; compare this to Alberta's lowest which was 56 percent in 1963. Likewise the highest turnout in Saskatchewan was 85 percent, with nine out of the ten elections shown being over 80 percent. On the other hand Alberta's highest voter turnout was 83 percent in 1935, and that was the only one over 80 percent with only two elections reaching over 70 percent turnout. The average voter turnouts for Saskatchewan and Alberta between 1934 and 1971 were 83 percent and 67 percent respectively.

These figures clearly show the considerable variance between Alberta and Saskatchewan in the voter turnouts.



TABLE 1

Percentage of Voter Turnout in Saskatchewan and  
Alberta Provincial Elections, 1932-72

Saskatchewan		Alberta	
Year	Percentage	Year	Percentage
1934	85	1935	83
1938	84	1940	75
1944	81	1944	69
1948	83	1948	64
1952	83	1952	59
1956	84	1955	68
1960	84	1959	64
1964	84	1963	56
1967	78	1967	63
1971	83	1971	73
Mean	83		67
Median	84		66

Sources: Martin Robin, ed., *Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of the Ten Provinces*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1972), p. 312; Howard A. Scarrow, *Canada Votes: A Handbook of Federal and Provincial Election Data* (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1962), pp. 214-223; Chief Electoral Officer, Province of Saskatchewan, Regina; Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Province of Alberta, Edmonton; Professor T. Peterson, Department of Political Science, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg; *Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon), June 24, 1971.





The only time they came close to being equal was in the 1934 and 1935 elections in which the Saskatchewan turnout was only 2 percentage points higher than Alberta. This exceptional case could perhaps be explained by the presence of a certain "populist fever" in Alberta during this period when Wm. Aberhart and the Social Credit party made their dramatic entry into Alberta politics, winning fifty-six of sixty-three seats in the legislature. Allowing for this exception, it is quite obvious that the differential in voting habits in Saskatchewan and Alberta is very significant and would indicate that in voting, at least, Saskatchewan inhabitants are more politically active than their Alberta counterparts.

This contrast is paralleled in federal elections as shown in Table II for the years between 1921 and 1958 inclusive. Again in this table it can be seen that, with the exception of the elections of 1921 and 1925 (when the two provinces were almost equal in percentage of voter turnout) Saskatchewan has a consistently higher voter turnout, amounting to 9 to 13 percentage points higher than in Alberta for all of the other years shown. In other words the difference between Saskatchewan and Alberta appears several years later.

Both Saskatchewan and Alberta got involved federally with the Progressive Party. This party continued to thrive in Alberta while dying in Saskatchewan. Albertans have practically always voted with the opposition. Could this have led to disillusionment and perhaps account for the low level of political participation? Saskatchewan, on the other hand, has voted with the federal government supporting the federal Liberals through to the fifties and early sixties.

It is noteworthy, however, that Saskatchewan's voter turnout in federal elections is lower than their provincial election turnout.



TABLE II  
Voter Turnout at Federal Elections in Saskatchewan and  
Alberta, 1921-1958

---

	Saskatchewan	Alberta
1921	67.5%	63.5%
1925	56.8	56.9
1926	69.7	56.5
1930	80.8	66.2
1935	77.0	65.3
1940	77.5	64.3
1945	85.2	73.4
1949	79.4	69.3
1953	74.2	62.6
1957	81.0	73.0
1958	81.9	74.4

---

Source: Howard A. Scarrow, *Canada Votes: A Handbook of Federal and Provincial Election Data* (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1962), p. 238.





Perhaps the voters of Saskatchewan felt more able to manipulate their provincial legislature by pragmatic voting than would be the case with the federal government.



## PART II

The logic of inquiry that is most relevant for this discussion is the comparative in historical perspective. In order to compare two entities meaningfully, it is important to delineate both the similarities and the differences in their attributes.

In our case we have two very similar provinces which show a remarkable difference in political consciousness. By first examining the similarities between Alberta and Saskatchewan we can perhaps discover the differentiating attributes that may be contributing significantly to this phenomenon.

One of the most obvious similarities is the fact that Alberta and Saskatchewan were both part of the Northwest Territories -- and administered by the federal government -- until 1905 when they became provinces. As a matter of fact, it was the desire of the Territorial Legislative Assembly to create one province of this area instead of two, but, Prime Minister Laurier and his government, rationalized that such a large province could become too powerful and "overshadow the position of the existing provinces within confederation" (David K. Elton in Calderalo, 1979). The boundary between the two provinces was set arbitrarily and did not represent significant cultural, political or geographical differences (Ibid).

Alberta and Sasktachewan achieved provincehood relatively late (1905), and even then, were denied full provincial autonomy. They did not have jurisdiction over public lands and natural resources; thus sharing an exceptional position in confederation. This lack of control over their own lands and resources was unacceptable to both provinces for they felt that little concern would be given to local conditions and needs in the



development of resources and in the settlement of the land. Each of the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan protested vigorously to Ottawa but it wasn't until 1930 under depression pressures that they were granted control over their natural resources and public lands -- a privilege enjoyed by all other provinces, except Manitoba, from the outset of confederation. This position of inferiority in the federation and the fight to achieve rights, were a shared experience by these two provinces in confederation.

Two other grievances shared by Alberta and Saskatchewan were the presence of protective tariffs in Canada and the freight rate structure. Referring to the former, Vernon Fowke (1957, p. 67) states that, "the prairie economy grew up within a pre-established framework of tariffs which shaped, limited, and curtailed its development".

The Dominion high tariff was enacted in 1879 and other tariffs were added in subsequent years. These were designed to protect industry in the central provinces, and the goals of the National Policy were propagated by the central provinces with the settlement of the west. With the burgeoning population of the prairie provinces, the demand for secondary products grew, and because the manufactured goods of the central provinces were protected by tariff barriers, the settlers were forced to buy products at a higher price than might have been paid for foreign goods without tariff protection. This situation naturally galled the people of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and this anger was perpetuated by the freight rates they were forced to pay on goods consumed.

Transportation costs are of vital concern to the western provinces in the interior of Canada. Not only do the prairie provinces pay more for transportation of goods because of the great distances involved, but the





national transportation policy has initiated a discriminatory freight rate structure. This issue has created perhaps more western regional discontent than any other (T.D. Regehr in David Bercuson, 1977, p. 115). The freight rate concern has been a binding factor in the relationship between Alberta and Saskatchewan since confederation, and the issue is as much alive today as it ever was. It is indeed an element of the similarity of political and social culture in the provinces being examined. Similarity -- cultural, economic and social -- leads one to wonder at the great dissimilarity in political participation.

To many Canadians the idea of the "National Policy" is associated primarily with the protective tariffs instituted in 1879. It was actually much more than that. It encompassed the aim of settling the west with vast numbers of agricultural immigrants (and central Canadians) for the purpose of preserving this territory for central Canada against American expansionism. Even more importantly, it would enhance the economic well-being of the merchants of Ontario and Quebec by providing consumers of manufactured goods.

Of course, the protective tariffs were an important ingredient of the latter plan and the building of a transcontinental railway was essential to its inauguration. In the context of this plan, the colonized settlers of the west were indeed merely the instruments for the successful implementation of a grand imperialist plan which would augment the wealth and power of the central provinces. It is not surprising therefore, that western alienation was and is an important factor in the social and political fabric of the prairie provinces. A.K. Davis sums it up nicely when he describes Canadian society in terms of the Metropolis/Hinterland dialectic. In this perspective the Prairie Provinces can be viewed as the



"Hinterland" to Ontario's "Metropolis". Certainly, this is an unenviable position for Alberta and Saskatchewan in the economic and cultural structure of Canada. Saskatchewan and Alberta share an overwhelming experience of alienation as they dwell in the economic resource oriented hinterland of Canada.

This unequal union is inherent in the roots of Canadian society. It began with the union of Upper and Lower Canada and the domination of the British element over the French Canadians (Ryerson, 1968). It spread to the structural relationship of Central Canada (or perhaps only Ontario) to the Prairie Provinces. This was most apparent in the economic union.

Although I have indicated that the economic bases of Alberta and Saskatchewan are being put forward as an important difference between them, it is to be noted that there are certain basic similarities on this dimension. Historically, these two provinces have had an essentially agricultural economy and to this day agriculture is an important element of their economics. Table III shows the dominance of agriculture in both Alberta and Saskatchewan for the years of 1929 to 1935. It can be seen however, that agriculture occupies a larger proportion of Saskatchewan's economy than it does that of Alberta. This difference will continue to emerge and will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter IV on the economic dimension.





TABLE III

Percentage of Agriculture and Manufactures of the Total  
Value of Net Production in Saskatchewan and Alberta,  
1929 - 1935

Year	Saskatchewan		Alberta	
	Agriculture	Manufactures	Agriculture	Manufactures
1929	72.5%	12.3%	54.0%	18.6%
1930	57.9	19.9	46.9	22.0
1931	53.5	26.3	55.6	19.6
1932	77.8	15.1	63.4	17.1
1933	77.4	15.2	65.2	16.5
1934	76.1	13.6	66.8	15.5
1935	79.1	12.5	62.9	18.6

Source: Canada, Department of Trade and Commerce, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, General Statistics Branch, Survey of Production in Canada, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1935.



Furthermore, one must add that there has been a scarcity of manufacturing in both provinces due to geographic position and to the freight rate policy. Table III gives evidence of the relatively small share of the net production that manufacturing holds in each province. As will be shown in Chapter IV the economic bases of the two provinces at the beginning were much alike, but the differences became more visible with the discovery of oil at Leduc, Alberta in 1948.

The geographic similarities of Saskatchewan and Alberta are well known -- the southern prairie land, the parkland farming area in the central regions and the forested logging country in the northern areas. These similar geographic areas give rise to corresponding economic activities and consequently, comparable types of people engaging in these activities.

It can be seen from Table IV that agricultural occupations dominate the labour force in both Alberta and Saskatchewan although they are a higher percentage in Saskatchewan. This difference is quite significant -- ranging from a percentage difference of 9.4% to 14% for the census periods between 1911 and 1951 -- and will be discussed in Chapter IV. This is not to deny that the economics of both provinces depended heavily on agriculture, especially in the early years. Blue collar workers are the second largest part of the work force in both provinces but in this case Alberta has the highest percentage ranging from 6.5% to 9.9% for the years shown. The gap isn't so wide in the other categories shown but Alberta is consistently higher in all of these than Saskatchewan.

The presence of the Rocky Mountain range has of course added to the diversity of Alberta's economy with it's mining potential and it's powerful attraction to tourists.



TABLE IV  
Occupational Distribution of the Labour Force,  
1911 - 1951 (In Percent)

	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951
<hr/>					
<u>Alberta</u>					
Professional managerial	7.9	10.5	9.9	10.6	14.0
Other white-collar	6.4	9.6	9.3	9.4	14.7
Agricultural	49.9	52.8	50.9	49.0	32.0
Blue-collar	29.6	20.0	22.4	22.1	28.3
Not Stated		0.1		0.1	0.6
<u>Saskatchewan</u>					
Professional managerial	6.0	9.7	9.2	9.8	12.9
Other white-collar	5.2	8.0	7.6	7.7	11.7
Agricultural	63.9	65.2	60.3	59.3	48.8
Blue-collar	19.7	11.3	15.9	14.4	18.6
Service	5.3	5.6	7.1	8.8	7.7
Noted Stated				0.2	0.5

Source: Peter R. Sinclair in Carlo Caldarola ed., "Society and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers," Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1979, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1961.





A case can be made for the similarity of ethnic composition in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Table V shows each province's immigrant population for the years between 1931 and 1951 inclusive.

This table reveals the general similarity in numbers and percentages of the whole for each of the ethnic and racial groups represented. As stated earlier, we intend to investigate this phenomenon more thoroughly and the results will be reported in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it to say at this time that both Alberta and Saskatchewan contain an ethnically heterogeneous population giving yet another reason to conclude that these two provinces are similar enough to be comparable.

We have shown the wide disparity in percentage of voter turnout between Saskatchewan and Alberta. This, in my opinion, gives rise to serious questioning regarding the dynamics of this phenomenon. In addition, it has been demonstrated that these provinces have enough similarities to be comparable. The balance of this thesis will be devoted to an historical comparison of Alberta and Saskatchewan examining other aspects of their culture which may have influenced the voting behavior of their respective residents.



TABLE V  
Immigrant Population by Racial Origin

1931	Saskatchewan		Alberta	
		%		%
British	128,607	42.1	148,561	50.4
N. European	40,715	13.3	33,667	11.4
W. European	76,880	25.2	56,609	19.2
E. European	54,450	17.9	50,901	17.3
Asian & Other	4,201	1.4	4,773	1.6
TOTALS	304,854		294,511	
POPULATION	932,785		731,605	
1941				
British	96,186	36.9	123,298	51.4
N. European	30,031	11.5	30,231	12.6
W. European	59,244	22.7	38,746	16.1
E. European	51,953	19.9	44,068	18.3
Asian & Other	2,959	1.1	3,602	1.5
TOTALS	260,383		239,945	
POPULATION	895,992		796,169	
1951				
British	51,163	32.6	73,818	33.6
*U.S.A.	39,482	25.2	55,504	25.3
N. European	11,662	9.4	15,147	6.9
W. European	10,143	6.4	16,332	9.4
E. European	42,406	27.0	54,736	24.9
Asian & Others	2,005	1.2	3,748	1.7
TOTALS	1156,861		219,285	
POPULATION	831,728		939,501	

Source: Compiled from tables in Statistics Canada 1931, 1941, 1951.

\*Note: This category is not available in the 1931 and 1941 figures. It is included because it is felt that it is useful to compare Alberta and Saskatchewan for this period at least on the U.S. immigrant population.





## CHAPTER III

### THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA

"Though the neighbouring provinces" of Alberta and Saskatchewan were "pencilled out of the Northwest Territories simultaneously...the two provinces were to evolve as individual entities whose respective characteristics would emerge beyond the fact of almost identical constitutional beginnings" (Wright, 1955, p. 123). These characteristics emerged on a number of different dimensions each evolving concurrently and concomitantly with one another.

In order to discover why and how this divergence occurred, it is necessary to examine each of these dimensions separately, tying them together at appropriate points. The first dimension I will discuss is the evolution of divergent political cultures, always remembering the earlier definition of "political culture" as the political environment or milieu within which the populations live and operate. This does not necessarily include their levels of participation in politics but would probably exert an influence on their tendency to participate.

In order to meaningfully investigate the political cultures of Alberta and Saskatchewan, it is necessary to scrutinize the historical evolution of the various parties in each of the provinces being discussed.

While one of the old line parties -- the provincial Liberal party -- exerted a powerful influence on the political culture of Saskatchewan, three new parties were to become important factors in the political life of each of the two provinces. In Alberta, the United Farmers of Alberta in the 1920's and the Social Credit party in the 1930's and onward helped shape its political culture. In Saskatchewan, the Cooperative Commonwealth



Federation (re-named in 1961 the New Democratic Party) served correspondingly. However, at this point I would like to go back to the beginnings of provincehood for Alberta and Saskatchewan to trace their respective political development.

When Alberta and Saskatchewan achieved provincehood in 1905, each was given a Liberal lieutenant governor by the reigning Liberal government in Ottawa. Each, in turn, appointed a Liberal premier to form a cabinet and thus captured the institutions of each of the new provinces. In Alberta, Premier Rutherford was appointed. He governed in a constructive, rather conservative way (Thomas in Caldarola, ed., 1979) until 1910 when he resigned over the Alberta and Great Waterways scandal. This scandal broke the hold of the Liberals over Alberta and they only remained in power until 1921 because of the powerful personality of A.L. Sifton, the new premier (Ibid). After the scandal Alberta voters no longer believed in the old-line parties; especially the Liberals, who have not recovered in Alberta to this date.

Saskatchewan's first premier was Walter Scott, who governed the province until 1916. Saskatchewan's electorate was mostly composed of farmers and Scott actively sought their views. He appointed personnel from the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association and set a pattern which they were to follow successfully for a long period of time for, with the exception of the depression period between 1929 and 1934, they remained in power until 1944. For this and other favours the farmers eschewed direct political action and opted for partisan politics (Courtney and Smith in Robin, ed., 1972, p. 294). Thus the Liberals had discovered a means of staying in power. They continued to cater to the farmers demands even when it led to disassociation from federal Liberal policies.



This courtship of the Saskatchewan farmers by the Liberal party, and the response it evoked at the polls, marks one of the most important distinctions between the political cultures of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan voters learned how to manipulate the government, became adept in pragmatic voting and through the process became more politically sophisticated and aware. Eager (in Ward and Sapfford, eds., 1968, p. 3) touches upon this when she says that "in Saskatchewan...political parties must conform to agrarian demands. The parties know it and the voters know it". It is contended that this exercise of political competence would lead naturally into a higher level of political participation through the avenue of political awareness and interest. It is noteworthy that all provincial parties in Saskatchewan since 1905, have catered to the farm voters and their manipulative ability.

Alberta farmers, on the other hand, chose a different route by which to achieve political influence. Farm groups all across the prairie had been using collective pressure to induce the government to regulate freight rates, marketing practices at grain elevators, and to remove protective tariffs on farm machinery (Betke in Caldarola, ed., 1979, p. 15). The United Farmers of Alberta functioned as any other farm group until a political alternative arose with the election of Henry Wise Wood to the presidency in 1916. Wood was able to express the ideas and aims of the U.F.A. within the context of a social theory (Ibid). He saw society as a community existing by the co-operation of each of the economic groups; and each of these groups needed to be strongly represented in order for the co-existence to succeed.

The U.F.A. turned to direct political action in 1918 and Wood, anxious that the organized farmers not lose their unanimity through the





transition to politics, began a series of speeches, interviews and articles, preaching the doctrine of group movement by instructed delegation (Ibid). In other words the direction for government would come from the party convention and/or from instruction from the economic group which each delegate represented. This form of government is not compatible with the two-party parliamentary system and cabinet government. Hence, needless to say, it gradually deteriorated to a more cabinet governed form (McPherson, 1953, p. 4).

The most important thing that can be learned from the tenure of the U.F.A. in Alberta is the fact that the farmers of Alberta opted for indirect political action in electing their farm organization to govern the province. By doing this, they abdicated direct responsibility in influencing and/or controlling the government through voting or lobbying. The farmer voters could relax and let their organization do the job for them. It would seem that they would need less accurate knowledge of what was happening in the government if they felt that they could rely on their own organization in government. Likewise, participation in the voting would probably seem less compelling under these circumstances. This argument is perhaps hypothetical but somewhat supported in the literature (Robin, pp. 300, 294, 290).

Saskatchewan voters, on the other hand, would need to keep abreast of current events in order to manipulate the political party in power. It is recorded that they became quite adept at doing just that (Courtney and Smith in Robin, 1972, p. 290-291). This exercise would probably keep the farmers more well informed and would influence them toward more political participation than would be the case of Alberta farmers who could afford to become politically indolent whilst their farm organization functioned in office.



This split was the first major difference to appear between Alberta and Saskatchewan in their political culture. This feeling of dependence on one party to make their decisions for them seemed to epitomize the attitude of the Alberta voters from that time hence. This attitude was quite readily transferred from the U.F.A. to the Social Credit movement under William Aberhart. Alberta, in the mid-thirties was suffering from the economic depression which gripped all of Canada. This was the period of the rise of the protest parties -- the Social Credit in Alberta, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.) in Saskatchewan.

In Alberta, the factor which made the 'Socreds' so successful was the ability of the party to serve as a social movement as well as to offer a solution for the economic crisis (Caldarola, 1979, p. 35). Aberhart, himself was a Messianic figure with his combination of religious fervor and economic zeal. The Alberta electorate was gripped with populist fever and charmed by the charismatic leadership of Aberhart. An important ingredient of the Socreds success was their ability to provide a movement which could command the loyalty of an ethnically diverse population. The movement provided a new sense of social bonding and collective identity to an otherwise diverse collection of ethnocentric communities and enclaves (Ibid).

The rise of the Social Credit in Alberta demonstrates two important aspects of the political culture of Alberta -- the entrancement with a political party to the literal exclusion of all others, and the susceptibility to the appeal of charismatic leadership. This tendency toward monopoly government started with the U.F.A. and has continued to present time. Aside from the brief periods of transition (1971) from Socred domination of the legislature to the even greater Conservative





domination (1975 election) the Alberta legislature has been consistently dominated by one party to the near extinction of the opposition.

There have been various explanations of this phenomenon in the literature, notably C.B. McPherson (1953) who states that the Canadian west has a tradition of non-partisan politics and that the alternative party system is not indigenous to the west. The problem with this theory is that it lumps the prairie provinces together. It can be seen from our earlier comments that Alberta and Saskatchewan have many similarities, one of which is their inferior position in confederation until 1905, and even then without control over their public lands or natural resources until 1930. However, it has been shown that their political cultures have taken divergent paths since the advent of the U.F.A. party in Alberta. I must reiterate that the pattern of monopoly government is unique to Alberta (in this comparison), and thus provides us with one possible explanation for the disparity in voter-turnout percentages between this province, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The experience of living under a monopoly government would probably have the effect of rendering a feeling of helplessness amongst the voters. Indeed, Paul and Caldarola (1979) have found widespread apathy among Edmonton voters which could perhaps be attributed to this feeling of powerlessness -- the perception of not being able to change anything with their one vote. Even the example given by their Government of governing without opposition would seem to leave the voter with a feeling of impotence. Albertans must watch their government performing in an atmosphere impervious to opposition with the possible exception of a lone N.D.P. member protesting like a "voice crying in the wilderness". Is it any wonder that they seem little interested in politics? They probably





probably feel that it is a hopeless endeavour to try to change anything in government.

It would be a fair question to ask, at this point, why the Alberta voters do not vote in an opposition. There are three reasons for this in my opinion. Firstly, their apathy would prevent them from voting. Secondly, Albertans have shown a tendency toward conservatism and in this province there is no viable alternate party. The only feasible opposition party seems to be the N.D.P. and they are obviously too far to the left for socialist-fearing Albertans. Thirdly, it seems that Albertans are now accustomed to one-party dominance in their government. These would seem to be the reasons for continuing what was begun by the U.F.A. and perpetuated and intensified by the Social Credit monopoly. Today, we are witnessing an even greater monopoly by the Conservative party which bears out the points made above -- this type of one party dominance seems to perpetuate itself to the point of furthering the monopoly with each election.

Although this trend started with the U.F.A., it was perfected by the Social Credit party. The Social Credit party under Wm. Aberhart was a populist religio-political movement. The social theory of the movement and the charismatic leadership of Aberhart inspired unquestioning loyalty among the population. This loyalty amounted almost to a religious faith and would account, not only for the high majority of Socreds elected, but for the implicit trust the people put in their government which negated the need to participate actively in politics, even to the extent of not getting out to the polls on election day.

The evidence of charismatic leadership and monopoly government is a strong perpetuator of low political participation. In Alberta this



manifested itself as an almost religious faith in a utopian paradise where participation was not needed. On the other hand, monopoly government can lead to a feeling of powerlessness among the electorate negating the urge to vote or participate in other ways. This phenomenon is a very important factor differentiating Alberta and Saskatchewan in political participation.

Saskatchewan, on the other hand, shows a history of active participation in politics. Their decision for partisan politics in the early years of provincehood demanded participation through voting. At the same time the Provincial Rights party (later the Conservative party) provided a viable opposition, monopolizing the position of principal minority party and thus preserving the two-party system in Saskatchewan (Robin, 1972). Later, of course, the C.C.F. occupied the opposition until elected to govern the province in 1944.

The C.C.F. is a party which grew largely out of the "left-wing" movement of the Farmer's Union of Canada. Although, particularly in the early years, the party was for the most part geared toward the farmers needs and aspirations, they were not elected to office until 1944. The farmers were not about to put their faith in even their own party until they had proven themselves. The C.C.F. party stayed in power until 1964 when the Saskatchewan electorate again demonstrated their versatility by electing the Liberals to govern. Saskatchewan voters seem less concerned if a political party be 'left' or 'right' than if they operate in what they consider to be in a productive way. Courtney and Smith (in Robin, ed., 1972) explain that:



the acquiescence of early Liberals government in the farmers' demands for public regulation of the economy accustomed the citizens to active government; as a result transfers of power between "free-enterprise" and "socialist" governments failed to precipitate major reversals of policy.

The practice of pragmatic voting through manipulation of partisan politics was shown again when Saskatchewan elected the C.C.F. again in 1971 and then the Conservatives in 1982. There would seem to be little or no regard given to the leftist or rightist leanings of these parties, but only the pragmatic demand for results. There is none of the monopoly government and perennial party power shown in Alberta. In a province where there is always the possibility of electing an alternate party, the electorate is more likely to be aware of the issues and to turn out at the polls. This seems to be the case in Saskatchewan.

It has been argued above that the political cultures of Saskatchewan and Alberta have emerged over the past seventy-eight years in quite different directions. That this would affect the political participation of the inhabitants of the respective provinces is beyond doubt. It is not intended here to measure the depth and content of the effect, but merely to note that the difference is there and to point out the likely effect on the voter. Political culture is one dimension in the diversity between Alberta and Saskatchewan. Another is the economic base of each province, which will be examined next.





## CHAPTER IV

### THE ECONOMIC BASES OF ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN

Although I made the decision to discuss separately the three given dimensions which could be affecting political participation in Alberta and Saskatchewan, it must be stressed that the economic dimension is inextricably interrelated with the political culture of a society. The biases of a governing political party have a tremendous effect on the economic functioning of its industry -- be it manufacturing, farming or the service sector. Indeed, the actual decisions taken by the legislative assembly, cabinet ministers, or their deputies can manipulate the day-to-day decisions of management and the working environment of the salaried employees.

In any case, I shall discuss the economic dimensions as a separate entity, linking it with the political factor when the occasion warrants. Needless to say, it will be assumed that the reader will be aware of the political element inherent in all economic fluctuations.

In Chapter II the basic similarities of the economies of Saskatchewan and Alberta were discussed. Both provinces have had an economy largely based on agriculture coupled with the logging industry in the northern parts of each province. The differences began to emerge with the advent of the great depression of the 1930's.

Although the depression of the 1930's was nationwide -- indeed world wide -- it was doubly experienced in the prairies because of the severe drought during that period. This is where the differences in Saskatchewan and Alberta became apparent.

In the south-east corner of Alberta and the south-west part of Saskatchewan is a territory known as the Palliser Triangle. In the good



years when there is adequate rainfall, this area can support farms which produce thirty to forty bushels of wheat to the acre. This is enough grain to support a family on a half or three-quarter section of land. However, when a period of drought strikes, as it did in 1929, the area becomes like a desert.

During the period of drought from 1929 to the middle thirties, a high percentage of the farmers were driven to accept "relief" from the government. Conditions were so bad that many farms didn't produce crops at all. Others produced some grain, but the price was so low that farmers would make a net profit of as little as one half a cent per bushel.

During those years of drought topsoil was blown from the land by the relentless prairie winds. With no grass to anchor the soil the topsoil was literally stripped from the land. On many days it would be extremely difficult to find one's way with the drifting soil obliterating the sun and bringing the visibility down to zero distance. The soil would drift up against fences and in many cases the fences were completely buried under the piles of topsoil. These conditions caused great hardship amongst the farmers and in many cases they abandoned their homesteads to seek better land in a more northerly area. Of course, some farmers stayed to rebuild their land by planting legumes and learned the art of contour plowing to prevent soil drift.

Saskatchewan's portion of the Palliser Triangle is much greater than Alberta's so that the number of people affected by the drought in Saskatchewan was relatively higher than that in Alberta. For this reason alone one could say that there were more people in Saskatchewan likely to be discontent with their economic condition and prospects.





However, there were other ways in which the two provinces differed. Saskatchewan farmers used their land to produce wheat with little else upon which to base their economy. In fact, Saskatchewan has been described as having a one-crop economy up until a few decades ago. Alberta's rural population, on the other hand, utilized their land in a different way. Of course there were the wheat farmers, but there was also extensive use of the dry prairie in the south for ranching. These ranches were very large and during a drought the ranchers could weather it out by raising the ratio of acres per head of cattle. When the price of wheat came crashing down, the ranchers were still in a position to market their beef albeit at a lower price than formerly. In addition the land on the ranches was not cultivated so there was no problem of soil drifting. An additional bonus for the farmers of Alberta was the presence of irrigation canals in southern Alberta. This, of course, enabled the farmer to raise better crops and to diversify his products into such areas as vegetables and seeds as well as enhancing the raising of livestock.

The economic base of a province can be important in determining the political consciousness of the residents. It may be particularly important in this case because the provinces we are comparing share a common border and are similar in many other ways. Thus any disparity in economic conditions is readily observed by the researcher and, more importantly, by the people themselves. Relative deprivation can be a powerful energiser of political activity.

There are two dimensions of relative deprivation; firstly, deprivation relative to former prosperity and secondly, deprivation relative to an adjoining or neighboring territory. Both of these dimensions would apply in this case although the second is more applicable





to this study. Both Alberta and Saskatchewan experienced deprivation relative to their former economic conditions at the onset of the depression of the 1930's. However, the degree of deprivation may have been quite different in each province. Land use patterns in Alberta lessened the effect of the depression in that province.

Upon examining Table VI it can be seen that for the years from 1925 to 1930 Saskatchewan had a substantially higher number of acres under cultivation, with a correspondingly higher value than did Alberta. What is noteworthy here is that from 1931 to 1934, although Saskatchewan's stayed roughly the same (and much higher than Alberta's), the value of the crops produced were much lower than that of Alberta. Surely this reflects the contrasting effects of the drought and the depression in Alberta and Saskatchewan and perhaps also the results of different land use in Alberta (such as the production of sugar beets, fall wheat, and grain hay -- crops not grown in Saskatchewan during those years at least).

However, from the figures shown here it would seem that the drought did have a severe effect on the income of farmers in both provinces, although far greater on Saskatchewan farmers. Between 1929 and 1931 the value of field crops in Saskatchewan fell from \$235,248,000.00 to \$70,347,100.00 while in Alberta it fell only from \$157,254,000.00 to \$98,916,600.00, always keeping in mind that Alberta had only between 54 and 61 percent as much acreage under cultivation as Saskatchewan.

Table VII shows the total acres under cultivation and the percentage of wheat crop acreages. Again Saskatchewan has a higher percentage of wheat grown. It should be noted however that Alberta's wheat acreage shown here includes both spring wheat and fall what. Saskatchewan's includes spring wheat only as winter wheat was not grown. This would



TABLE VI

Total Acreages and Values of Field Crops in  
Saskatchewan and Alberta, 1925 - 1934

	SASKATCHEWAN			ALBERTA		
	Acres	Value for Acre Averages	Value \$	Acres	Value \$	Value for Acre Averages
1925	18,758,491	19.63	368,274,521	8,516,917	157,227,282	18.40
1926	19,388,609	15.94	309,128,000	10,705,948	202,149,000	18.88
1927	19,527,971	17.82	348,005,000	10,971,761	272,743,300	24.86
1928	21,063,678	16.55	348,586,000	11,727,830	220,786,000	18.83
1929	22,420,232	10.49	235,248,000	12,432,595	157,254,000	12.64
1930	22,868,300	5.26	120,215,000	12,561,400	95,828,400	7.63
1931	21,973,954	3.20	70,347,100	13,420,980	98,916,600	7.37
1932	22,333,900	4.40	98,216,900	14,028,700	95,913,000	6.84
1933	21,306,000	3.88	82,708,000	13,909,400	86,499,000	6.22
1934	19,771,820	4.78	94,440,600	12,929,000	108,499,000	8.39

Source: Compiled from figures in the Canada Year Books 1931 and 1934 - 35.



TABLE VII

Area Under Cultivation in Field Crops and  
Percentage Planted to Spring Wheat,  
Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1929 - 1931

	<u>Saskatchewan</u>	<u>Alberta</u>
1929		
Total Area	23,031,870	12,628,134
% Wheat	62.7	59.8
1930		
Total Area	22,868,400	12,808,400
% Wheat	62.7	55.9
1931		
Total Area	21,946,342	13,168,502
% Wheat	68.2	60.3
1933		
Total Area	21,306,000	13,909,400
% Wheat	69.0	56.7
1934		
Total Area	19,771,760	12,929,000
% Wheat	67.1	58.0

Sources: Figures compiled from Canada Year Books, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934 - 35.





inflate Alberta's relative percentage of wheat. Another factor is that grazing lands (or ranch acreages) are not shown in these tables.

Saskatchewan residents then, not only suffered greater deprivation in relation to their past than did Albertans, but they may also have experienced deprivation in relation to their neighbouring province of Alberta. It is probable that economic discontent of this type would have led to greater political activity on the part of the people of Saskatchewan.

No discussion of rural Saskatchewan would be complete without mention of the cooperatives. "The cooperative movement, which today includes the majority of Saskatchewan farmers, is an indication of the desire to stabilize rural economy by eliminating the middleman" (Seymour Lipset, 1950). Cooperation is particularly strong in Saskatchewan, in fact "it has been said that 'Saskatchewan is simply one big co-op': (Lipset, 1950). This is not to negate the cooperative movement in Alberta but simply to say that the movement may be stronger in Saskatchewan. However, unfortunately, there is a lack of figures for Alberta co-operatives. Saskatchewan has the largest co-op movement on the continent. In 1950 there were 125,000 farmers in Saskatchewan who held 500,000 co-op memberships (Lipset, 1950, p. 54), an average of four memberships per farmer.

The cooperative movement in Saskatchewan arose out of sparse settlement and lack of urban centres with its accompanying lack of amenities and social services. Farmers united to obtain cooperatively such things as telephones, roads, medical and hospital facilities, not to mention their grain and produce marketing associations. Twine tractor fuel, fertilizer and other means of production were purchased in bulk



through cooperatives. "Widespread community participation and political interest...developed in Saskatchewan in response to environmental and economic problems" (Lipset, 1950, p. 265).

Lipset (1950) states that political action usually arises out of a depression or a major social crisis whereas cooperative movements usually occur during a period of prosperity. It is noteworthy that Albertans responded to the depression with political action in the form of electing the U.F.A. in 1921 and subsequently in 1935 the Social Credit. Then Albertans seemed to relax and let the government do all. Saskatchewan residents, on the other hand, went along with the Liberals, although controlling them through pragmatic voting, and threw themselves into cooperativism wholeheartedly. Cooperativism is an indication of agrarian class unity and the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan grew largely out of this movement.

McCrorie (1964, p. 118) agrees that "there is not question of the role of co-operatives in the (Saskatchewan) Movement," but he qualifies this in stating that the function of the Movement has been to provide individual agrarian entrepreneurs with a means by which to adjust to a capitalist system. Saskatchewan farmers were able to transpose their movement into a politically viable party.

Experiences in participating in co-operatives have made the Saskatchewan farmer more adept in politics. Because of the high degree of organization there has been a more rapid acceptance of new ideas and the constant stimulation has led to a high degree of political interest and participation. Moreover membership in co-operatives have given good training in leadership. In Saskatchewan, in the co-operatives, the ratio of members to officials runs from five to one, to twenty to one.



Community participation and leadership have proven to be important factors in the political life of the residents of Saskatchewan.

Prior to the discovery of oil in Leduc in 1948, agriculture was the basic industry in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Table VIII shows percentage value of net production for Saskatchewan and Alberta for the years of 1929 - 1935 inclusive. As can be easily seen, agricultural production is much higher than any of the other categories in both provinces. More than 72 percent of the output of Saskatchewan, and 54 percent of that of Alberta were obtained from farming in 1929. In 1931 the proportions were Saskatchewan 77.8 percent and Alberta 63.4 percent, while in 1935 they were: Saskatchewan 79.1 percent and Alberta 62.9 percent.

Even so the relative importance of agriculture was declining at that time in the Prairie Provinces. Agriculture contributed 70.3 percent of the total output in 1921, 80.3 percent in 1925; in 1930, 56.2 percent, and in 1931, 53 percent. In 1932, agriculture contributed 60.6 percent and in 1935, 61 percent of the total net production of the Prairie Provinces. Manufacturing held second place in Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1935. Mineral production, consisting chiefly of coal mining, held third place in Alberta (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Production in Canada, 1929-36). Information for later years is given in tables XI - XIV inclusive and will be discussed at that time.

Although natural gas and naptha were discovered in Turner Valley, Alberta in 1914, it wasn't until 1936 that light conventional crude oil was discovered there. Of course, this discovery had a certain impact on the economy but it was the blow-in of Leduc No. 1 in 1948 which changed Alberta's economic base. "Under the heavy investment of the oil and gas industry in the years of rapid growth after Leduc, Alberta's economic base





TABLE VIII

Percentages of the Value of Net Production of Saskatchewan and Alberta by Industry  
1929 - 1935

	SASKATCHEWAN							ALBERTA						
	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Agriculture	72.5	59.9	53.5	77.8	77.4	76.1	79.1	54.0	46.9	55.6	63.4	65.2	66.8	62.9
Forestry	2.2	4.2	5.8	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.5	3.3	3.9	3.3	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.5
Fisheries	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Trapping	0.9	0.9	1.3	0.8	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7
Mining	0.9	1.8	2.3	1.4	2.5	2.5	2.1	14.6	16.5	14.3	13.5	13.7	11.4	10.8
Electric Power	1.8	3.5	5.4	3.8	3.4	2.9	2.6	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0
Construction	9.3	13.3	7.8	1.5	0.5	3.6	3.3	8.0	8.8	5.7	2.5	1.3	2.0	3.7
Repair Work	3.0	4.5	6.0	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.4	2.9	3.8	3.4	2.9	2.4	2.3	2.9
Manufactures	9.1	13.7	18.1	18.9	18.9	9.3	8.4	8.0	14.1	16.8	14.3	12.3	11.8	13.6
Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Canada, Department of Trade and Commerce, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, General Statistics Branch, Survey of Production in Canada, 1930, 1932, 1934, 1935

Note\*: The percentages may not add up exactly to 100 due to rounding.



shifted dramatically from its prewar dependence on agriculture to a new reliance on the industrial staples of petroleum and natural gas" (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p. 160).

Between 1935 and 1971, the agricultural share of production totals slipped from 54 to 14 percent in Alberta, while mining's share increased from 11 to 39 percent, manufacturing from 16 to 20 percent, and construction from 14 to 23 percent. During this period in Saskatchewan agricultural production fell from 79 percent in 1935 to 42.9% in 1970 while mining's share increased from 2.1% to 23% and construction from 3.3% to 14.3%. These do represent an increase but not as dramatic a shift as is the case of Alberta.

This shift in the economic base of Alberta has had a dramatic effect on the quality of life of Albertans. With the increase in manufacturing, and particularly in the oil servicing industries, as well as the actual work directly related to oil extraction and refining, the migration from the farm to the urban centres began in earnest. "Rapid urbanization is not, of course, unique to Alberta, but in no other Canadian province has the domination of the city over the countryside been accomplished so abruptly" (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p. 162). Part of this urbanization, of course was accomplished by the influx of workers, and their families, from other provinces. Alberta's population doubled between 1946 and 1971 and between 1941 and 1971 the percentage of urban population rose from 32 to 73 percent.

Let us compare Alberta and Saskatchewan on population increase and urbanization. Table IX shows population and percentage change for Alberta and Saskatchewan for the years 1951-1971. Saskatchewan's growth was much slower and less than Alberta's, and in fact was a negative factor in the



TABLE IX

Population and Percentage Change of Population of  
Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1951 - 71

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population</u>					
	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971	
Saskatchewan	831,728	880,665	924,181	955,344	926,242	
Alberta	939,501	1,123,116	1,331,944	1,463,203	1,627,874	
	<u>Percentage Change</u>				<u>/Average annual change</u>	
	1951-56	1956-61	1961-66	1966-71	1951-71	1966-71
Saskatchewan	5.9	5.1	3.3	-3.0	0.5	-0.6
Alberta	19.5	18.6	9.9	11.2	2.8	2.2

Source: Canada Year Book, 1941 and 1974.





years from 1966-71. In these years Alberta was becoming more industrialized and attracting wage workers whereas Saskatchewan was losing this class of workekr through lack of industry.

Table X analyzes rural/urban distribution of the popuulation in Saskatchewan and Alberta and shows quite clearly the difference in urbanization between the two provinces. Saskatchewan has remained largely rural (68.4%) with it's actual farm population being 25.2% in 1971 compared to Alberta's 14.5% (Canada Year Book, 1974, p. 163).

Table XI and XII gives the provincial incomes for Alberta and Saskatchewan respectively for the years of 1965 to 1980 inclusive. In comparing the two tables it becomes evident that corporation profits in Alberta were consistently higher than in Saskatchewan in the years from 1965 to 1980. The same is true for the non-farm unincorporated business category. On the other hand, farm income in Saskatchewan was higher than Alberta's during the same period. In comparing the gross domestic product of the two provinces for the years shown, it can be seen that there is a great disparity, with Alberta's being much higher throughout the time period.

Tables XIII and XIV show the percentage of the net provincial income taken up by farm income, corporate and non-corporate non farm business and the percentage taken up by wages. These percentages do not add up to 100% because interest income and military pay have been omitted. For the years 1965 to 1980, Saskatchewan farm income comprises a higher percentage of the net provincial income than does Alberta farm income. This is reflected in the non-farm businenss category where Alberta is consistently higher. The percentage of wage income is also higher for Alberta for the years 1965 to 1976 inclusive, after which Saskatchewan is slightly higher.



TABLE X

Number and percentage of the Population Classified  
as Urban and Rural in Alberta and Saskatchewan,  
1931 and 1971

	<u>SASKATCHEWAN</u>		<u>ALBERTA</u>	
	1931	1971	1931	1971
Rural Population	630,880	435,610	453,097	431,620
%	68.4	47.0	61.9	26.5
Urban Population	290,905	490,630	278,508	1,196,250
%	31.5	53.0	38.1	73.5

Source: Canada Year Book, 1941 and 1974.



TABLE XI  
Provincial Income of Alberta, 1965 - 1980  
(millions of dollars)

	Labour	Profits Before Taxes	Net Income Farm Operators	Net Income Non-Farm Unincorporated Business
1965	1,843.0	593.9	268.0	293.0
1966	2,083.0	695.7	396.0	317.0
1967	2,345.0	801.6	241.0	347.0
1968	2,623.0	918.3	262.0	383.0
1969	3,043.0	943.8	255.0	408.0
1970	3,351.0	976.2	241.0	430.0
1971	3,694.0	1,208.9	253.0	465.0
1972	4,114.0	1,504.8	322.0	484.0
1973	4,796.0	2,207.8	618.0	542.0
1974	5,873.0	3,133.4	811.0	566.0
1975	7,366.0	4,071.5	710.0	654.0
1976	8,867.0	4,221.5	504.0	769.0
1977	10,231.0	5,160.6	358.0	845.0
1978	11,350.0	5,977.3	679.0	922.0
1979	13,502.0	7,627.7	870.0	1,028.0
1980	15,894.0	8,628.5	967.0	1,117.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Provincial Economic Accounts, p. 20 - 21.





TABLE XII

Provincial Income of Saskatchewan, 1965 - 1980  
(millions of dollars)

	Labour	Profits Before Taxes	Net Income Farm Operators	Net Income Non-Farm Unincorporated Business
1965	844.0	313.7	416.0	182.0
1966	944.0	340.6	663.0	208.0
1967	1,049.0	319.1	268.0	188.0
1968	1,130.0	316.8	272.0	194.0
1969	1,203.0	263.9	397.0	204.0
1970	1,326.0	271.3	242.0	204.0
1971	1,494.0	329.8	513.0	209.0
1972	1,494.0	365.6	358.0	217.0
1973	1,743.0	506.5	890.0	262.0
1974	2,165.0	598.1	1,401.0	261.0
1975	2,702.0	629.8	1,373.0	304.0
1976	3,209.0	636.3	1,246.0	334.0
1977	3,579.0	718.8	894.0	364.0
1978	3,902.0	925.0	1,055.0	391.0
1979	4,432.0	1,251.4	966.0	425.0
1980	5,069.0	1,466.1	1,130.0	458.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Provincial Economic Accounts, p. 18-19.



TABLE XIII

Provincial Income for Farm, Corporation, and Wage  
of Alberta, Analysis by Percentage  
of Industries, 1965 - 1980

## ALBERTA

Year	% Farm	% Corporation	% Wage
1965	8.0	26.5	55.0
1966	10.2	26.1	53.7
1967	5.8	27.5	56.3
1968	5.6	27.9	56.3
1969	5.0	26.3	59.2
1970	4.3	25.2	60.0
1971	4.1	26.8	59.3
1972	4.5	28.0	57.8
1973	6.9	30.5	53.2
1974	6.9	31.3	49.7
1975	4.8	27.8	49.6
1976	2.9	29.0	51.5
1977	1.8	30.2	51.4
1978	2.9	29.4	48.4
1979	2.9	29.4	47.6
1980	2.6	29.5	48.1

Source: Compiled from figures in Statistics Canada,  
Provincial Economic Accounts, Provincial Income  
of Alberta, Analysis by Percentage of Industries,  
1965 - 1980



TABLE XIV

Provincial Income for Farm, Corporation, and Wage  
of Saskatchewan, Analysis by Percentage of Industries,  
1965 - 1980

## SASKATCHEWAN

Year	% Farm	% Corporation	% Wages
1965	21.9	26.1	44.4
1966	28.6	23.7	40.7
1967	13.4	25.3	52.4
1968	12.9	24.3	53.6
1969	17.4	20.5	52.6
1970	11.0	21.6	56.1
1971	19.6	20.6	50.7
1972	13.2	21.4	54.9
1973	24.2	20.9	47.3
1974	28.4	17.4	43.9
1975	24.0	16.3	47.2
1976	19.8	15.4	52.0
1977	13.8	16.7	55.1
1978	14.0	17.4	51.7
1979	11.3	19.6	51.7
1980	11.4	19.4	51.0

Source: Compiled from figures in Statistics Canada,  
Provincial Economic Accounts, Provincial  
Income of Saskatchewan, Analyzed by Percentage  
on Industries, 1965 - 1980.





These figures reveal the fact that a higher percentage of Saskatchewan's population is involved in farm operations than in Alberta.

Lipset (1950, pp. 16-34) discusses the history of agrarian radicalism in North America from the post civil war depression of 1873 - 78 to the election of the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan in 1944. His discussion of the various socialist and populist movements clearly shows that the main support for these movements have been agriculturally based. This is Lipset's idea, but further research would be needed to prove his point. Nevertheless, it provides an interesting area of speculation. Involvement in radical movements implies political involvement in general and perhaps explains some of the reasons for the higher level of political participation in Saskatchewan compared to Alberta. Saskatchewan is a farming province with a history of agricultural domination of it's economy.

Alberta's economic base has always been a good deal more diversified than that of Saskatchewan. In addition to the diversified farming and ranching mentioned earlier, Alberta has had meat packing plants, coal mining, oil, gas and the tar sands, as well as a substantial business and financial community (Richards and Pratt, 1979, p. 151). Alberta is also more urbanized than Saskatchewan. Because Alberta has had more business and industry, it had developed a larger and stronger business-oriented bourgeoisie (Ibid).

These contrasts present a very different political culture within which the agrarian radicalism would hardly apply to the more industrial and urban Alberta but would seem to apply ideally to the case of Saskatchewan.



Table XV shows a comparison of the Per Capita Gross Domestic Product of Saskatchewan and Alberta for the years from 1951 to 1974 inclusive. In every year Alberta's per capita G.D.P. is higher than Saskatchewan's. While it is recognized that oil and gas can inflate the G.D.P., it is still evident that Albertan's are experiencing a more prosperous atmosphere than Saskatchewanites. Again, the evidence or perception of prosperity can lead to political indolence -- a basic self-satisfaction which sees no reason to change the status quo.

Our examination of the economic bases of Alberta and Saskatchewan have shown them to be quite different. This disparity in economic conditions would undoubtedly affect the level of political participation in each province. A person who is economically well off is less likely to see the need for political participation than his cohort who is experiencing a certain amount of economic difficulty. It has been established that there is a difference in levels of political participation in Saskatchewan and Alberta and it is proposed that one reason for this difference may be the divergence in the economic bases of the two provinces. Another reason could perhaps be found in the religio-ethnic factor which will be examined in the next section.



TABLE XV

Per Capita Gross Domestic Products for Alberta  
and Saskatchewan, 1951 - 1974

	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>Saskatchewan</u>
1951	\$1,739	\$1,562
1952	1,896	1,891
1953	1,912	1,741
1954	1,813	1,341
1955	1,997	1,668
1956	2,238	1,871
1957	2,161	1,673
1958	2,204	1,818
1959	2,248	1,858
1960	2,258	2,001
1961	2,331	1,789
1962	2,449	2,271
1963	2,574	2,709
1964	2,697	2,527
1965	2,917	2,755
1966	3,282	3,204
1967	3,427	2,916
1968	3,718	3,048
1969	4,033	3,281
1970	4,252	3,216
1971	4,514	3,785
1972	4,952	4,056
1973	6,046	5,337
1974	7,028	7,019

Source: Bureau of Statistics, Alberta Treasury,  
Alberta Economic Accounts, 1947-1974.  
Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics,  
Saskatchewan Provincial Economic Accounts.





## CHAPTER V

### THE ETHNICITY DIMENSION

Ethnically both Alberta and Saskatchewan show a heterogeneous composition, although there are certain differences as shown in Table I. According to these figures, taken from the Canada Census for the years shown, Alberta has a consistently higher percentage of British immigrants. However, the differences in the percentage of immigrants of British origin for Alberta and Saskatchewan are not significantly large enough to account for the disparity in political consciousness.

Lorne Brown (1969) and S.M. Lipset (1950) express similar views of the part played by the British immigrant in Saskatchewan. Brown claims that Saskatchewan was influenced by British immigrants, many of whom were aware of Labour Party ideas. Lipset seems to infer that the development of agrarian class consciousness in Saskatchewan was furthered by the British and perhaps impeded by the other ethnic groups. He says, "an influence negating the rapid growth of the agrarian movement was the presence of large numbers of immigrants from non-English speaking countries" (1950).

Not only were these immigrants settled in ethnic enclaves having little to do with English-speaking settlers, but they were intent upon establishing themselves on a farm and succeeding in a new country with little time for politics. This argument, of course, does not take into account the fact that many European ethnic immigrants had been exposed to oppression, labour unrest and left-wing politics in their homelands. While it may be valid to assume that European ethnics would have had little interest in agrarian movements for the reasons mentioned above, it



would seem probable that, given the background of many of them, they would at least have attained a degree of class consciousness.

Table V in Chapter II shows that Saskatchewan had a higher percentage of immigrants in 1931 and 1941 from Western European countries. This difference has reversed itself in 1951. While the percentage of East European immigrants was comparable in 1931 and 1941 for the two provinces, in 1951 Saskatchewan had a slightly higher percentage (27% - 24%). It is interesting to note that the percentage of East European immigrants in 1951 is quite close to the percentage of British immigrants in Saskatchewan. Again, it must be said that the differences are not really significant.

However, it may be noteworthy that, for the three census periods, Saskatchewan has a consistently higher percentage of continental European immigrants. On the other hand, Myron Johnson (1978) gives figures to show that in 1931, "compared to Canada as a whole, Alberta had a much greater ethnic mix...In 1931 German, Ukrainians and Scandinavians made up 26% of Alberta's population, compared to 9% in Canada as a whole".

This of course does not give a direct comparison to Saskatchewan but it would seem to negate a hypothesis that ethnic dissimilarities can explain a difference in political consciousness between Saskatchewan and Alberta. The question of ethnic political allegiance is a very nebulous area. There is much discussion in the literature regarding this but it is conflicting or even contradictory in nature. For example, ethnic origins of rural delegates to C.C.F. conventions in Saskatchewan in 1931 and 1941 show that Anglo-Saxons are over-represented, with Scandinavians ranking second. The other ethnic groups are grossly under-represented. An explanation for this, of course, is that the Anglos were the earliest settlers (with Scandinavians next) and were probably well established





economically. This gave them the time, energy and hope to devote themselves to politics. Of greater importance would be the fact that these older settlers would have higher status and would thus be much more likely to be elected as representatives to a political convention.

So, on the one hand we have the argument that British settlers would have more class consciousness than the continental European settlers while on the other hand we are told that Alberta's diverse ethnic mix of non-English people would account for Alberta's rallying behind a radical or populist movement -- the Social Credit.

It is true that we are investigating political consciousness rather than left-wing/right-wing populist movements, however we are searching for the difference between the two provinces which could perhaps explain the different levels of political participation in the two provinces. In regard to this last point, it would seem that ethnicity cannot account for the disparity in political consciousness for the following reasons: (1) The ethnic composition of Alberta and Saskatchewan are quite similar; (2) Conflicting evidence (or interpretation) of the political consciousness and behaviour of ethnic groups; and (3) Lack of evidence that non-British ethnics do in fact have a consistent political behaviour -- especially in terms of participation across time and distance.

A point that comes out clearly is that whatever the differences amongst the heterogeneous ethnic populations of both provinces, these were overcome by the Social Credit in Alberta and the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan. The Social Credit provided a social movement with a charismatic religio/political leader. It not only offered a solution to the economic crisis in the 1930's but was able to elicit a degree of unity and agreement amongst this diverse population (Caldarola, 1979). This is





remarkably similar to Lipset's (1950) idea that the common economic problems of the Saskatchewan farmers provided a rallying point which cut across ethnic lines.

For our purposes then, the religio/ethnic dimension seems to have little explanatory value. It would seem that Saskatchewan and Alberta shared similar experience with their ethnic enclaves for Caldarola (1979) claims that the settlement of immigrants into ethnic enclaves "militated against an integration of interests in the province as a whole; while Lipset (1950), in discussing the agrarian social movement in Saskatchewan declares it was hampered by the presence of ethnic enclaves which in many cases were also associated with religious ties.

In other words one may conclude that in these two provinces ethnic enclaves are tightly integrated within themselves but very loosely integrated with the larger society. While this may or may not imply that political participation is low in these enclaves, it does not explain why the levels of political participation are so different in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, keeping in mind the similarity of the ethnic compositions of the two provinces.

Thomas E. Flanagan (1979) has studied ethnic voting in Alberta but his effort is in linking ethnicity with political party voting. Ian McPherson (1979) traces the history of ethnic participation in the forming and managing of co-operatives and their continuing membership. With the variety of ethnic groups active in these endeavours -- such as the Finnish, Ukrainians, British, Scandinavian and others -- it can be assumed that the heterogeneous populations in Alberta and Saskatchewan yielded a heterogeneous mixture of community participaters.



Further research in this area is needed in order to determine the linkage, if any, between ethnicity and political participation.



## CONCLUSION

That there is a higher level of political participation in Saskatchewan there is little doubt. Not only does Saskatchewan have a higher voter turnout than any other province in Canada, it also has a higher proportion of party activists or opinion leaders than any other province. "By virtue of political participation and involvement, Saskatchewan voters over the years have become aware of the various issues, policies, candidates, and parties, as well as their alternatives" (Robin, 1972). This not only accounts for the pragmatic voting but enables it. Alberta voters, on the other hand have been labelled as politically apathetic as witnessed by their low voter turnout, low level of political participation and non-pragmatic voting.

Voting occupies a central place in democratic politics and in contemporary political science. Increasingly sophisticated studies have analyzed the sources of partisan support and political participation, especially voting, among different individuals and groups within nations...Who chooses to stay home and who goes to the polls can often determine who wins on an election, and voting is a major instrument by which leaders are compelled to be attentive to citizens...Moreover, voting turnout is a critical indication of the involvement of citizens in the national political life of a society...(Rose, 1980, p. 5).

Of the three indicators of political participation cited in the introduction (Chapter I), voter turnout would seem to be the most widely recognized and used (Rose, 1980; Taylor, 1980; Sills, 1968; and others). In this study we are not so much concerned with the psychological inner motives of each individual as we are with the over-all voter turnout figures for the total voting population of each province. Voter turnout figures for Saskatchewan and Alberta confirm the considerable disparity in political participation between Alberta and Saskatchewan.





Our study of these two similar provinces has shown that two variables -- political history and economic base -- have proven to be at variance in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It seems fair then, to conclude that the economic bases and political cultures have probably had an effect on the political participation of the populations being examined. The ethnic minority variable is possibly related but further research is needed to clarify this dimension.

It is recognized that the left-wing/right-wing dichotomy may not be shown as clearly causally linked to political participation. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that these political leanings are a part of the political culture within which the population of each of the provinces operates.

This has been a comparative study, exploratory in nature. The conclusions drawn on the material herein are being put forward as possible linkages in the causal chain affecting political participation. While each may be related to levels of political participation they are also interrelated with one another.



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